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Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

3 July 1985

UN Mediation of the Iran-Iraq War: Tilting
Toward Iran Yields Little Progress [redacted]

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Summary

UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar has been attempting to mediate the Iran-Iraq war for the past year with little success. In March 1985 he presented both sides with a proposal that would reduce the scope and intensity of the conflict but not create a ceasefire. Iran, which is willing to discuss issues that do not impede its ability to carry on the ground war, responded favorably; Iraq rejected the proposal because it wants a ceasefire and negotiations on a comprehensive peace. In our view, Perez will remain committed to his initiative in the hope that a major Iranian military defeat or Khomeini's death will make it possible for him to include the ceasefire Iraq demands. [redacted]

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The Secretary General's strategy has been designed to win Iran's confidence without alienating Iraq. [redacted]

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Diplomatic reporting indicates that Perez believes Tehran is prepared to be flexible and wants to use him as a mediator. In our view, Iran is determined to continue fighting until Saddam is toppled. If it should decide to enter negotiations, we believe it would not use Perez but turn to an Islamic mediator--perhaps Turkey or the Organization of Islamic Countries. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted], Subversion Analysis Branch, Office of Global Issues. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Foreign Subversion and Instability Center, on [redacted]

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Introduction

UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar has been an active mediator in the Iran-Iraq war. Over the past year he has focused on such individual war-related issues as chemical warfare, attacks on civilian population centers, and treatment of POWs rather than formulation of a comprehensive peace agreement. While Tehran is willing to discuss issues that will not impede its ground attacks and has been receptive to Perez's piecemeal approach, Iraq believes agreements on individual issues would only allow Tehran to pursue the ground war more vigorously and is only interested in negotiations aimed at a comprehensive settlement. We believe Baghdad has worked with the Secretary General primarily because of its desire to project a conciliatory image. []

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Perez's Efforts Yield Few Results

The Secretary General has had little success with this piecemeal approach:

- o He brokered an accord in June 1984 in which the two sides agreed not to attack each other's civilian population centers but it broke down in March 1985 when Iraq resumed air raids on Iranian cities.
- o In April 1984 the Secretary General sent a team of experts to investigate Iranian charges that Iraq was using chemical weapons. The experts reported that chemical weapons were used but failed to name Iraq as the perpetrator.
- o In late 1984 Perez organized a task force to investigate the treatment of POWs. The group reported in February 1985 that both sides mistreated prisoners.
- o This year Perez dispatched a doctor to examine Iranian soldiers allegedly exposed to chemical weapons. The doctor's report led the Security Council to issue a statement in April that sharply criticized the use of chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers but again refrained from condemning Iraq by name. []

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The Target of Iranian Manipulation

We believe that the Iranians tried to encourage Perez to continue his initiative by leading him to think that they were willing to drop their demand for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's ouster. The Secretary General traveled to Baghdad and Tehran in late March to discuss the plan and, according to diplomatic reporting, Iranian leaders told him that they would agree to a ceasefire if Iraq were condemned and Iran received reparations.

shortly after Perez left Tehran, Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini made clear to a group

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of diplomats from Islamic countries that Iran would continue fighting until Saddam Hussein was toppled. In our judgment, the Iranians were successful in persuading the Secretary General of their flexibility. UN Undersecretary General Cordovez told the US Mission to the UN that Perez is convinced he is the only viable mediator in the dispute because the Iranians had encouraged him to continue his efforts while other would-be mediators had left Tehran empty-handed. []

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Perez told our UN Mission that some unspecified "balanced" action by the Security Council might induce Iran to be flexible. He said that his talks in Tehran convinced him that past Council resolutions, one of which calls for a comprehensive settlement, were an impediment to his mediation role. The Iranians accuse the Council of being pro-Iraqi because it has not condemned Baghdad for starting the war. Although Tehran says it will not engage in a comprehensive discussion of the war in the Security Council unless the Council first brands Iraq as the aggressor, it would participate in council deliberations if debate were limited to the Secretary General's March proposal. We doubt, however, that the Security Council will meet Iran's conditions: Tehran has no strong supporters while Iraq has France, a permanent member with a veto, and Egypt to serve as its defenders. []

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Outlook

We do not believe Perez's March initiative will achieve any significant progress. In our judgment, Tehran is ready to enter into agreements on peripheral issues, but is determined to continue the war. If the Iranians should decide to negotiate an end to the conflict, we doubt they would use Perez's services. In our judgment, they might turn to an Islamic mediator--perhaps Turkey or the Organization of Islamic Countries. We do not believe Iraq will enter into any step by step peace process that is not tightly linked to a ceasefire in the ground war. []

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We believe the Secretary General will remain committed to his March proposal for some time even if neither party changes its position. []

[] In our judgment, he is hoping a military or political event--for example, a major Iranian military defeat or Khomeini's death--will make it possible for him to include in the proposal the ceasefire that Iraq demands. []

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